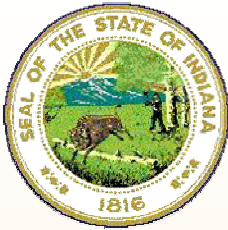


SENATOR TIM SKINNER



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Dear Friends:

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of a few of the issues facing legislators as we begin the 114th Indiana General Assembly in January. The four-month long session, by law, must adjourn on or before April 29, 2005. During that time, lawmakers will consider hundreds of proposals and make public policy decisions that will affect Indiana and its citizens for the next several years.

How to reduce property taxes, properly fund public schools, provide relief for Hoosiers most affected by rising health care costs, enhance economic development initiatives, continue efforts to retrain our workforce and create more jobs are just a few of the issues to be considered as we work together to make Indiana an even better place to live, work and raise our families.

Crafting a new state budget for the next two fiscal years will top the legislative agenda. Although we have managed to maintain solid reserves throughout the national recession, the state is facing a gap between expected spending and projected revenues. The key to managing the budget will be to cut spending by finding new efficiencies, consolidating agencies and eliminating ineffective programs. It is also important that we protect services and funding for education, or Indiana will begin to lose its ability to develop economically and grow our way out of the current fiscal situation.

I would like to request your input on the enclosed survey, which deals with legislation likely to be considered. I hope you will take time to complete the survey online or return it to me by mail. Once all responses have been tallied, you will receive the survey results.

Additionally, you will find information on how to get involved and stay informed. Subscribe to receive my legislative updates online or return the form on the back page to receive them by mail. Log on to the General Assembly's web site at www.in.gov/legislative/ to obtain full bill texts and committee hearing information. You can also contact me for legislative information or if you are experiencing any problems with which I can be of assistance.

As your State Senator, it is my job to communicate to the General Assembly the issues that matter most to the citizens of Senate District 38. Most of the bills enacted will in some way affect all of us, our families and our communities. Please contact me by phone, mail or email, and let me know your thoughts and concerns. The legislative process works best when citizens get involved. I look forward to hearing from you.

Wishing you a healthy and prosperous New Year,

REPRESENTING SENATE DISTRICT 38
INCLUDING VIGO, VERMILLION, PARKE,
AND WARREN COUNTIES

Focus on: **HEALTH CARE**



The rising costs of health care will undoubtedly receive much attention this session. As many as 600,000 Hoosiers are without health insurance coverage. Many of these individuals are employed by small businesses that cannot afford to provide coverage.

A governor's task force has developed a plan designed to reduce the growing number of Hoosiers with no health insurance. The "Hoosier Health Plan" recommends the pooling of small businesses and individuals who are self-employed to provide them with affordable health care under a bulk-purchasing plan with competitive rates. The state received federal funding to support the startup of the program, but it will be up to the new administration and the General Assembly to determine how to use the grant for pilot programs.

**"As many as
600,000 Hoosiers
are without health
insurance coverage."**

Being able to provide quality, affordable health insurance to many of Indiana's uninsured is more than a health care or insurance issue. It also relates to economic development and jobs. The majority of Indiana businesses are small, and their success is being threatened by rising health care costs. Many small businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to keep employees because of the financial burden health care has become.

Legislators are also expected to consider legislation to expand the state's new bulk prescription drug purchasing program, which was established by the 2004 General Assembly. The program created a pool of more than 400,000 state, local and public university employees to increase the state's buying power and the ability to negotiate lower prescription drug costs. Under a bill to be introduced in 2005, legislators will be considering the possibility of expanding the pool to include small businesses, county hospitals and non-profit organizations.

Issues confronting education

Legislators will be dealing with a host of education issues this year. While creating a new state appropriation plan, fiscal members will examine one of the budget's biggest components - **education funding**. There will be renewed efforts to provide adequate funding for school corporations based on each community's needs and challenges. However, the biggest struggle may be fought over the pressures of growing enrollment school corporations verses rural and urban schools with static populations but great needs.

How to continue progress on **school standards and accountability** given the state's budget restrictions will also be a dominate issue. The federal No Child Left Behind Act, which requires the implementation of higher standards and greater teacher accountability, has never been fully funded by the federal government forcing the state to dip into its own reserves.

Last year, knowing the importance of **early childhood learning opportunities**, legislators came close to passing a comprehensive program to expand optional full-day kindergarten and other early education programs. Regrettably, agreement could not be reached on how to fund the initiative. Consequently, this school year only 6,000 students attend full-day kindergarten statewide, although there are more than 500,000 Hoosiers under the age of six. It is my hope that this initiative will be re-introduced and receive further consideration. Additionally, lawmakers may consider a different approach that would move the current kindergarten enrollment age cutoff date from July 1 to September 1.

Serve as a Senate Page!

Students ages 12 to 18 may apply now to serve as Pages while the Legislature is in session January 4 through April 29. This day off school is considered an excused absence. For more information, call **800-382-9467, ext. 2-9523**.

The **Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Plus (ISTEP+)** test is a tool used to assess the educational progress of students in grades 3, 6, 8 and 10. The test is currently given in the fall so teachers can continue to work with students in areas that need more attention. Legislation may be considered to move the test to the spring to better assess what students have learned. Opponents feel that conducting the test in the spring would leave little time to address problems.

2005 Legislative Survey

Feel free to have another family member respond to questions in column #2.

You may also complete this survey on-line at www.in.gov/S38

Respondent
#1

Respondent
#2

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Should Indiana join several other states in a new drug-import program to make cheaper prescription drugs available from Canada and Europe, despite a federal ban on the imports? | 1. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Currently, 15 of Indiana's 92 counties observe daylight-saving time during the spring and summer months. This does <u>not</u> include Vigo, Vermillion, Warren or Park counties. Would you support legislation to require that the entire state observe daylight-saving time as proposed by Governor-elect Daniels? | 2. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Would you support legislation to authorize the use of public funding to provide vouchers for children to attend private schools? | 3. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Legislators approved the creation of charter schools in 2002, which provides another public school option. Currently, Indiana has 25 charters in operation serving nearly 3,000 students. Do you support further expansion of the program? | 4. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Do you support amending the Indiana State Constitution to include language that would clearly define marriage as a union between a man and a woman, even though this language already exists in current Indiana state law (Indiana Code 31-11-1-1)? | 5. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Would you support legislation to place a cap on college tuition and fee increases? | 6. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Do you support increasing high school graduation requirements to include more courses in math and science? | 7. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Do you favor the General Assembly approving legislation to require any medications containing pseudoephedrine (a meth precursor) to be kept behind the counters of retail stores and require legal identification and a signature before purchase? | 8. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. The ISTEP+ Test is given each fall to students in grades 3,6,8, and 10 to determine each student's learning level. When you include the time which students spend preparing to take the test, it is nearly a three-week process. Should the ISTEP+ Test be replaced with a test which takes less preparation time and time to administer? | 9. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Support <input type="checkbox"/>
Oppose <input type="checkbox"/> |

Additional Comments: _____

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. Your opinions are very important to me!



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Stay Informed

To keep you up-to-date on the many issues being considered by the Indiana General Assembly, I will be distributing brief updates discussing the challenges we face here in Indiana. If you are interested in receiving these periodic updates, please check the appropriate box.

- ☐ Please mail issue updates to my home address.
- ☐ Please Email issue updates to me. You can subscribe now online at www.in.gov/S38 or clearly print your Email address here _____
- ☐ I am not interested at this time.

If address is different than above, please print corrections clearly or affix mailing label here.

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State Capitol
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Indianapolis IN 46204-2785

Skinner '05 Legislative Survey Response

Please tape or staple here. Thank you.